

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1 to 12 without prejudice and add the following claims 13 to 24:

Claims 1 to 12. (canceled)

13. (new) A coated dye-containing pellet comprising a dye-containing pellet and a coating material that coats said dye-containing pellet;

wherein said dye-containing pellet contains a carrier material and from 0.1 to 70 percent by weight of at least one oxidation dye precursor, and said at least one oxidation dye precursor is uniformly mixed in the carrier material.

14. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 13, wherein said dye-containing pellet contains at least one direct dye.

15. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 14, wherein said at least one direct dye is selected from the group consisting of hydroxyethyl-2-nitro-p-toluidine, 2-hydroxyethylpicramic acid, 4-nitrophenylaminourea, Basic Violet 2, Disperse Violet 1, HC Blue No. 2, HC Blue No. 12, HC Red No.13, HC Red No. 3,4-amino-3-nitrophenol, 4-[(2-hydroxyethyl)amino]-3-nitrophenol, HC Red No. 10, HC Red No. 11, 2-chloro-6-ethylamino-4-nitrophenol, 2-amino-6-chloro-4-nitrophenol, HC Yellow No. 13, Basic Blue No. 99, Basic Brown No. 16, Basic Brown No. 17, Basic Red No. 76, Basic Yellow No. 57, 2,6-diamino-

3-[(pyridin-3-yl)azo]-pyridine and salts thereof.

16. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 13, wherein said carrier material is selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl pyrrolidones, dextrose, oligosaccharides, microcrystalline cellulose derivatives, physically modified starches, chemically modified starches, physically modified starch derivatives, chemically modified starch derivatives, synthetic calcium silicate, diatomite, silicon dioxide and free-flowing non-baking powders.

17. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 13, wherein said coating material is selected from the group consisting of cellulose derivatives, polyethylene dispersions, polyacrylic acids, polyvinyl alcohols, polyvinyl pyrrolidones, polycarbonates, polyesters, polyamides and natural film-formers.

18. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 17, wherein said natural film-formers include chitosan, shellac, oligosaccharides and colophony.

19. (new) The coated dye-containing pellet as defined in claim 13, wherein said at least one oxidation dye precursor is selected from the group consisting of 2,5-diaminotoluene, 2,4-diaminophenoxyethanol, resorcinol, 2-methylresorcinol, m-aminophenol, 4-amino-m-cresol, 4-amino-2-hydroxytoluene, 6-amino-m-cresol, 2-amino-4-hydroxyethylaminoanisole, 1-naphthol, hydroxyethyl-3,4-methylenedioxyaniline, 2,5-diaminophenylethanol, N,N-bis-(2-hydroxyethyl)-

p-phenylenediamine, phenylmethylpyrazolone, 1 -hydroxyethyl-4,5-diaminopyrazole, 2-amino-6-chloro-4-nitrophenol and salts thereof.

20. (new) A method of preparing a colorant for keratin fibers, said method comprising the steps of:

a) uniformly mixing from 0.5 to 50 percent by weight of at least one oxidation dye precursor with a carrier material to form at least one dye-containing pellet;

b) coating the at least one dye-containing pellet with a coating material to obtain at least one coated dye-containing pellet; and then

c) mixing the at least one coated dye-containing pellet with an aqueous or aqueous-alcoholic preparation.

21. (new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said carrier material is mixed with from 1 to 70 percent by weight of at least one direct dye to form said at least one dye-containing pellet.

22. (new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said carrier material is selected from the group consisting of polyvinyl pyrrolidones, dextrose, oligosaccharides, microcrystalline cellulose derivatives, physically modified starches, chemically modified starches, physically modified starch derivatives, chemically modified starch derivatives, synthetic calcium silicate, diatomite, silicon dioxide and free-flowing non-baking powders.

23. (new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said coating material is selected from the group consisting of cellulose derivatives, polyethylene dispersions, polyacrylic acids, polyvinyl alcohols, polyvinyl pyrrolidones, polycarbonates, polyesters, polyamides, chitosan, shellac, oligosaccharides and colophony.

24. (new) The method as defined in claim 20, wherein said aqueous or aqueous-alcoholic preparation is selected from the group consisting of water, mixtures of water and C₁ - C₆ alcohols, hydrogen peroxide solutions, hydrogen peroxide emulsions, hair cleaning agents, hair conditioners and hair-firming agents.